

1. The Problem.

) steel pipe is being carried north up a north/south hallway that is 8 feet wide. At the end of the hall there is a right-angled turn into a wider hallway 12 feet wide. What is the length of the largest pipe that can be carried around the corner? Assume the pipe must remain horizontal and that it can not be tilted. We will not be concerned with the diameter of the pipe in computing a solution to the problem.

2. A Trial-and-Error Solution.

Using a piece of graph paper or engineering paper, draw a vertical hallway 8 units wide that makes a right-angled turn into a horizontal hallway 12 units wide.

First, without doing any measuring or calculations, what is your intuitive "guess" with respect to the maximum length of the pipe that will make it around the corner? Approximately _____ units.

With a piece of spaghetti representing the steel pipe, break small pieces off of the end until the spaghetti will be able to just fit around the corner. Try to find the length of the spaghetti to the nearest 0.5 unit. As you do this, try to determine some of the necessary characteristics of the pipe that will make it the "longest pipe to fit around the corner". (Hint: To help determine some of the characteristics, after you answer the problem, cut another piece off of the spaghetti and see how this pipe is different from the pipe that answers the problem.)

Record the length here. _____ units. (Pipe is measured by units on the graph paper.)

What must be true about the pipe in relation to the two walls and the corner in order for us to find the length of the longest pipe that fits around the corner? _____

3. The Analytical Solution.

This problem can actually be solved analytically two different ways. One procedure involves trigonometry, while the other does not. We are going to solve this problem both ways, and we'll see if our results match and correspond to the "trial-and error" solution.

a) Solution #1 (Without trigonometry)

Draw a straight line on your figure representing the pipe. It should connect the two outside walls and touch the inside corner. Now, on your figure, draw lines to extend the inside walls of the hallways to the opposite sides. Your figure should contain two **similar triangles** and a **rectangle**. Label the lengths of the segments on the outside walls that we know (8 and 12) and also the parts that we don't know (with an X for the horizontal segment and a Y for the vertical segment). If the steel pipe measures a total of L feet, the figure shows it divided into two parts. Label these two parts of the pipe L1 and L2.

Using the Pythagorean Theorem write an equation containing L1 and an equation containing L2. Solve for L1 and L2 and write your expressions below.

$$L1 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$L2 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

We need both of the previous expressions in terms of the same variable X . Using the geometry of similar triangles, write a proportion which shows the relationship between X and Y .

Solve the equation for Y and complete the expression below, which shows the length of the pipe as a function of X .

$$L(X) = L_1 + L_2 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

On your calculator, graph L and use your graph to find the minimum value of the length of the pipe. (Remember, although it is a minimum point on your graph, it is the maximum length of pipe that will fit around the corner!)

According to the graph, the pipe should be $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ units.

How does your analytical answer compare to you “trial-and-error” answer using the piece of spaghetti?

b) Solution #2 (With trigonometry)

Label the angle in the bottom left corner of the your figure θ . Another angle in your figure can also be labeled θ . Find it and label it.

Using your right triangle trigonometry relationships, write a trigonometric equation for the relationship between L_1 and θ , and an equation between L_2 and θ . (Do not use X and Y in your equations.) Solve the equations for L_1 and L_2 and write your equations below.

$$L_1 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$L_2 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

Again, the total length of the pipe is the sum of L_1 and L_2 . This time, however, the length L is a function of the angle θ . Complete the equation below.

$$L(\theta) = L_1 + L_2 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

On your calculator, graph L , and use your graph to find the minimum value of the length of the pipe. Of course, substitute X for the θ in your equation and set your calculator to DEGREE mode.

What values of X make sense to the problem? $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

According to the graph, the pipe should be $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$ units.

How does this answer compare to your answer from Solution #1? $\underline{\hspace{2cm}}$